Salzberg: Friendship Forged in Orange
In the late ’40s, **ED BLEIER, MORT JANKLOW, BOB MENSECHL, and BILL SAFIRE** came together on the Hill and went on to highly successful careers while cherishing the bond they created with one another at SU

**BY CHARLES SALZBERG**

AFTER WORLD WAR II, RETURNING VETS TOOK advantage of the newly passed GI Bill, flooding colleges and universities in pursuit of the American Dream they’d just spent years in the trenches protecting. This presented a bit of a problem for four smart boys from New York City who had their hearts set on an Ivy League school. There just wasn’t any room.

So Ed Bleier ’51, Mort Janklow ’50, Bob Menschel ’51, H’91, and Bill Safire ’51, H’78, set their sights elsewhere, their eyes eventually landing on Syracuse University. The University previously accommodated a student body of 4,000, but was now bulging at the seams after nearly 10,000 veterans arrived on campus in 1946. Prefabricated buildings sprouted up all over campus as make-shift classrooms. With little available housing, students were spread out all over the city, some living miles from campus.

It was in this unlikely scenario that these four young men began a friendship that has lasted more than 60 years, a friendship that not only has seen their lives intertwine in sometimes surprising ways, but has also resulted in a deep, lasting connection and commitment to Syracuse University.

After leaving SU, each man made a lasting mark on society. Ed Bleier worked his way up to president of a division of Warner Brothers; Bob Menschel became a general partner at Goldman Sachs and established the industry’s first institutional department that became the model for all Wall Street firms; Mort Janklow made a name for himself as a literary agent, representing such clients as David McCullough, President Reagan, Pope John Paul II, Michael Moore, Danielle Steel, Barbara Walters, and Thomas Harris; and Bill Safire, who passed away in 2009, was an award-winning journalist and columnist for The New York Times and later chaired the Charles A. Dana Foundation, a private philanthropic organization devoted to leading breakthrough research and development in neuroscience, immunization, and neuroethics.

Road Trip

From his Goldman Sachs office on Park Avenue in Manhattan, Menschel recalls meeting Safire. “We lived on the Upper West Side and we both attended Bronx Science High School, so we took the same subway train back and forth to school,” he says. “I was the co-editor of our high school newspaper, and we never had enough material. I heard Bill read a short story for English class and asked him if we could use it. He said, ‘Yes.’ After that, we became close friends.”

At SU, Menschel and Safire wound up rooming together. “SU was a tough, rugged place to be,” Menschel says. “It was very competitive. We received IBM course cards and we’d line up to try to get the best teachers. If we didn’t, we’d tear the cards up and get back on line.”

After their first year ended, Menschel, Safire, and a mutual friend decided to drive across country. “The idea was to make it to California while working along the way, to get a sense of what the country was like,” Menschel says. “Bill
had a brother who lived out there and he used to say, ‘You can get all the orange juice you can drink for five cents.’”

With their parents’ help, they bought a second-hand 1945 Dodge, but Safire didn’t know how to drive, so while at Syracuse, Menschel taught him. “Both of us, looking for an easy course in high school, had taken automotive physics, but the problem was, none of us knew how to open the hood of the car,” he says.

From Syracuse they headed up to Canada, where they visited the steel mills in London, Ontario, then on to Detroit. “Through a friend’s uncle, we got a job running air-conditioning filters through the bath, cleaning them, then putting them in new frames,” Menschel says. “The filter was spun glass, and we spent the evening pulling fibers out of our fingers. In Yellowstone Park, we were approached by a bear for his cookies. In a friend’s apartment, we got a job picking apricots. We had to get up at five in the morning, pack ‘cots, then lay them out in the sun to dry.”

Menschel was an entrepreneur, always coming up with ways to make life easier for others while picking up a few bucks. “I had the idea to run buses from the campus to the Armory to get better crowds for Syracuse basketball,” he says. “It would have worked, except the one thing I didn’t figure on was the quality of the team. After a while, no one wanted to go to the games, no matter how easy I made it for them to get there.

“The beauty about things back then is you could do anything. It was free form. I even created an ‘Investment Week,’ with talks at Slocum Hall. I got a ticker tape and had speakers come in. It was a great success.”

**Media Attraction**

“I met Mort in elementary school, in Laurelton, Queens,” says Ed Bleier, leaning back in a chair in his Manhattan office, just off Sixth Avenue. Despite his official retirement as president of domestic pay-TV, cable, and network features at Warner Bros., Bleier, like Menschel, still goes into work. “We were best friends,” he says. “I used to call his mother, ‘Mom.’ The joke is that I was the first non-family member to kiss Mort’s sister.”

Janklow was a year ahead of Bleier, so he made it to SU before his best friend. When Bleier did make it north, in 1947, Janklow found him a room near campus. Menschel and Safire weren’t as fortunate, enduring long bus rides to campus from miles away, as Janklow had done his first year due to the housing crunch. Bleier met Safire working at WAER radio, where Safire wrote for the station, while Bleier produced. Downstairs, a young DJ named Dick Clark ’51 was announcing. The three eventually collaborated together on a WAER show. Bleier was also a stringer for the Herald-Journal and worked at WSYR-FM, where he broadcast Orange basketball and boxing, as well as Syracuse Nationals basketball games. In his last on-air appearance, he interviewed incoming SU head football coach Floyd “Ben” Schwartzwalder and sold it to the ABC radio network.

The summer after their sophomore year, Safire and Bleier took jobs in New York City. Safire researched and wrote a column profiling personalities in the New York Herald Tribune for Tex McCrary and Jinx Falkenburg, a husband-and-wife team who also had popular radio and TV shows in the city. Bleier wrote promotional copy for one of New York’s early TV stations, WABD (Channel 5). “Because Bill and I had jobs we aspired to, we said, ‘Maybe we don’t need to go back,’” Bleier recalls.

**Literary Pursuits**

“I met Eddie Bleier in the fourth grade,” says Mort Janklow, now a partner with Lynn Nesbit in New York, one of the most successful literary agencies in the world.

Janklow graduated high school at age 15 and was accepted to Yale, but only under the provision he attend a year of prep school. “My dad didn’t have that kind of dough, and when I learned Syracuse might consider me, that’s where I decided to go,” he says. He met Safire through Bleier and was drawn to him immediately. “We had an intellectual
bond,” he says. “He was politically sensitive and so was I.”

Janklow wanted to go into the foreign service, but a professor warned him not to. “You’re Jewish and there’s a ceiling you won’t be able to break through,” he recalls being told. Instead, Janklow attended Columbia Law School and wound up on Wall Street. When he decided to move on from there, he joined a real estate firm, where he learned all about negotiation, and when Safire went to work for Richard Nixon, Janklow ran Safire’s public relations company for him. “When Watergate broke, Bill thought it was a good time to leave his White House job,” Janklow says. “He didn’t want to be in p.r. anymore, so I helped him sell the firm. I asked him, ‘What do you really want to do now, Bill?’ He said, ‘I want to write a book about Nixon and write a newspaper column.’”

Janklow told Safire he’d find him a book agent, but Safire wanted him to do it. “I know what I know and I know what

I don’t know,” Janklow says of the proposition. But Safire insisted, telling him “I’ll write a proposal in a month, that’ll give you time to learn.”

Janklow asked friends Michael Korda and Jason Epstein for a sample contract, realized it was to a writer what a lease was to a tenant, and went about rewriting it. When the proposal was ready, Janklow sent it out with a non-disclosure clause and made editors come into his office to read it, something unheard of prior to that. He sold it to William Morrow with a September 1 deadline, making sure Safire met the date, because with Watergate breaking and Nixon in disgrace, he didn’t want the book turned down for non-delivery. Morrow, smelling disaster, wanted to reject the book as unacceptable. Janklow couldn’t dissuade the publisher, so he resold it to Doubleday, with the proviso that the publisher couldn’t change a word. Then he lined up Pulitzer Prize-winning authors to say how great the book was. With that in his pocket, Janklow sued Morrow in arbitration. After weeks of testimony, Morrow backed down and settled financially, giving up any rights to the manuscript. “As a result of that, I got a lock on D.C. authors because of Bill’s good-mouthing me,” he says.

Janklow’s stable of authors grew rapidly, to the point where he became one of the most powerful agents in the business. When Menschel wrote Markets, Mobs and Mayhem: A Modern Look at the Madness of Crowds (2002), Janklow represented him. And he did the same for Bleier’s The Thanksgiving Ceremony: New Traditions for America’s Family Feast (2003). Both became bestsellers.

Sharing Life Experiences

Usually, after graduation friends drift apart, especially when they start their own families. This didn’t happen with Bleier, Janklow, Menschel, and Safire, who stayed intimately involved in each other’s lives. They double-dated. They shared beach houses. When Bleier was looking for a job, after 10 months of active duty in the reserves, he hung out at Safire’s office, where Safire was working for McCrary and Falkenburg. McCrary started the draft Eisenhower movement and, with Jock Whitney, chairman of the Republican Party, and Safire, they created an event to help motivate Ike to run. Janklow recalls that Safire saw to it that college kids were stashed throughout the crowd, charged to start chanting. “We want Ike,” at any opportunity.

Bleier fixed Safire up with the woman who would become his wife, and then Safire returned the favor, introducing Bleier to his future wife. They attended each other’s weddings. Safire further built the relationship among the four when, in the late ’50s, he came up with the idea of having a group of interesting men meet to discuss their different businesses and their worldviews. That initial group meeting became known as the “Wednesday 10” and, although several of the original members have passed away, including Safire, the group still meets three times a year.

In 1994, Menschel helped arrange for Bleier to finally get his SU degree, receiving credit for life experience. “I became a Syracuse grad, Class of ’94, sic, ’51,” says Bleier, who took on a dual role at the College of Visual and Performing Arts Convocation that year as guest speaker and member of the graduating class. In 1978, the same year Safire won a Pulitzer Prize, Menschel was lobbying behind the scenes for SU to award Safire an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. In honor of his friend, Menschel also established the Safire Chair in Modern Letters at the College of Arts and Sciences. Years later, as a member of the Board of Trustees, Safire was fond of humorously saying he represented the dropouts at board meetings. Ever the political sage and wordsmith, Safire deliberately planned his retirement from his New York Times political column, “not wanting to become
old hat and repetitive,” he confided to Bleier. In turn, Safire relished his role as chair of the Dana Foundation and asked Bleier to join the foundation’s board, expanding its mission to include the arts. When Safire passed away, Bleier helped organize the Dana Foundation’s memorial for his longtime friend in Washington, D.C., and the Times’s memorial in New York City. “Speakers at both represented the entire political spectrum, reflecting universal respect for Safire,” Bleier says.

To this day, Bleier, Menschel, and Janklow stay in touch on the phone or in person. Through it all, they have retained their connection to the University. “Bob was the one who created the strong connection to SU for all of us,” Bleier says. “His enthusiasm was contagious. You might say he reintroduced us to SU.”

Menschel, an honorary SU trustee, has actively supported numerous initiatives on the Hill, most notably establishing the Robert B. Menschel Media Center in the Watson Theater Complex, the Robert B. Menschel Photography Gallery, and the Paul Volcker Chair in Behavioral Economics at the Maxwell School. Bleier endowed The Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at the Newhouse School and serves on the SU Marketing Committee with Menschel and Janklow. “As members of the marketing committee, it was important for us to support Chancellor Nancy Cantor’s initiatives,” Bleier says. “We’re proud of the work she has done to help improve the city, expand SU’s reach with academic and alumni programs, and raise the level of undergraduate education.”

Along with serving on the Board of Trustees, Safire was a member of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Board of Visitors and delivered two Commencement addresses. SU’s Bird Library includes a quiet reading room named in honor of Safire by the Dana Foundation, and his personal papers and rare book collection reside in the Special Collections Research Center. Besides his work with the SU Marketing Committee and the CAS Board of Visitors, Janklow is the moving force behind a new graduate degree program. “The Chancellor asked me to lunch,” he says. “I thought she was going to ask me for money, but instead she asked me a terrific question, ‘How can we distinguish ourselves?’ I came up with an idea to have a program in arts administration and she asked me to help fund it. I said, ‘Yes, if it could be a master’s degree program.’” The Janklow Arts Leadership Program welcomed its first class of graduate students this summer (see related story, page 12).

How did these successful men maintain such a close friendship over so many years? “We were brought up with the concept of loyalty,” Bleier says. “It’s about mutual respect, friendship, reliability. We always did favors for each other. I may not have agreed with Bill politically, but he was the best physiotherapist I ever met because he cured me of ‘knee-jerk reaction.’”

Janklow couldn’t agree more about their decades-long loyalty to one another. “If we got a middle-of-the-night phone call, we knew each of us would be there for the other. We reveled in each other’s successes. We knew we had friends we could count on,” he says, retrieving a piece of paper from his desk. “Bob sent this list over to me when I asked him about his rules for investment.”

That these men, at their age, after all this time, continue to rely on each other, help each other, sustain each other, is nothing less than inspiring. \( \text{ SSL } \)
“We want our passion for Syracuse University to be seen and felt long after we’re gone.”

Throughout her career in public education, PATRICIA MAUTINO ’64, G’66 witnessed raw, young talent and identified personally with students who needed financial aid to help them pursue their educational goals. Her husband, LOUIS MAUTINO ’61, G’62, attended SU on an athletic scholarship and went on to be a business owner in the building industry. Together, they are committed to helping young people prepare for successful lives and feel privileged to share their “Forever Orange” spirit with future generations.

As an active member of the Syracuse University Alumni Association and the iSchool Board of Visitors, and a longtime supporter of SU Athletics, “Pat” Mautino already has a strong presence on campus. And with the four scholarships the Mautinos have endowed through their bequest, their love for SU will become an everlasting legacy.

You can leave a legacy, too.

Bequests, no matter what their size, have an impact. In fact, SU’s continued success is the direct result of thousands of bequests—large and small—made by alumni and friends. To learn how you can do the same, call 888.352.9535, or e-mail giftplan@syr.edu. For help on writing a bequest, visit giving.syr.edu/samplebequest.

Be a leader.

When you make a bequest, you’ll be recognized as a Syracuse University Pathfinder—joining a group of insightful leaders who have included SU in their long-term financial plans and are leading the way for the SU students of today and tomorrow.

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